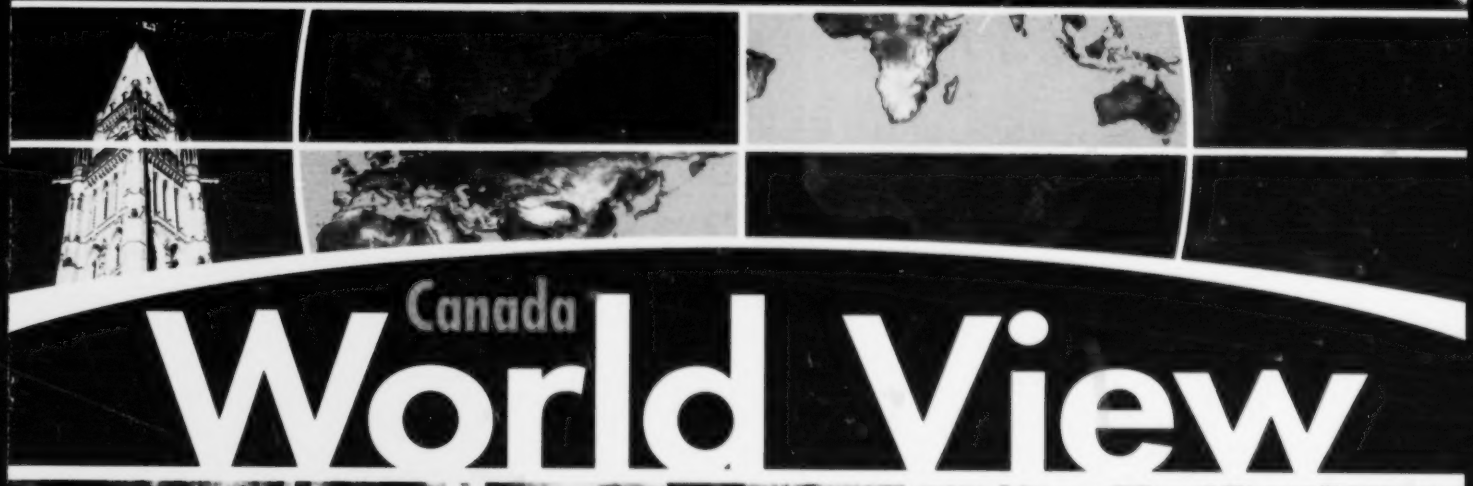

Canada World View

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In the Global Village

- Special report on urbanization
- Women in diplomacy
- No borders for Canadian artists

Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada
Affaires étrangères et Commerce international Canada
Canada

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URBAN PLANET

The global village is growing. A major conference on urbanization hosted by Canada has revealed that the "human tsunami" from rural to urban areas is making cities vibrant places of economic growth, while presenting myriad challenges with international implications.

Dhaka is a city in crisis. Ancient sewers in the Bangladeshi capital are leaking. Drinking water is dirty. The poorest of the poor live in spreading, squalid slums, their shacks lining waterways brimming with human waste, rotting garbage and a stew of chemicals. Cows and goats that drink from these waters die.

"Dhaka is falling apart at the seams," says John Carter, a Canadian environmental consultant based in Halifax who has worked on a number of development projects in the city.

In the residential neighbourhood of Hazaribagh, dozens of leather tanneries dump toxic effluent into an already filthy river and lake. Carter, who has travelled to many slums, believes it may be the most polluted spot on earth. "You can't really stand there for more than a minute because the air is so caustic it literally burns the inside of your nose."

Yet Carter, who has worked in Dhaka on an environmental management project supported by Canada, is struck by how the local people go about normal activities like working, eating and washing clothes amidst the smell and extreme pollution. "It's kind of like urban anarchy, but people have adapted, or accepted their fate."

Indeed, people keep coming—and coming—making Dkaha the fastest-growing urban centre in the world. According to United Nations estimates, in less than a decade Dhaka will rank second among the planet's 10 largest cities, with some 23 million inhabitants.

Cities across the developing world can tell similar tales of rapid growth, as people abandon rural areas for cities in search of a better life—and stay. Governments of every level are struggling to respond to the challenges as earth begins its first century as a mostly urban planet.

Rapid migration from rural to urban areas is changing how Canada is looking at development, says Tarik Khan, a director in the policy branch of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). "We have to find ways to ensure that place matters in addition to particular sectors for development."

photo courtesy of IU MP

◀ "People have adapted, or accepted their fate": Canadian environmental consultant John Carter surveys the banks of the Buriganga River in Dhaka.

photo: Stephanie Colvey/CIDA-WUF

▲ In the Dharavi slum in Mumbai, India, a girl stands by an open sewer.

Canada has helped put this key emerging issue on the international agenda. In Vancouver in June the Government of Canada hosted the third World Urban Forum, a major conference on urbanization. Canadians have also developed numerous initiatives targeting big-city problems around the world.

"Managing the transition to an urban planet and sustaining the dynamic evolution of cities into the future will be one of this century's fundamental challenges," says Keith Christie, Director General of the Environment, Energy and Sustainable Development Bureau at Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT). "Poor governance, the proliferation of slums, limited access to clean water and dignified sanitation contribute to poor environmental and social conditions with international implications. Canada's hosting of the World Urban Forum represents an important contribution toward sharing solutions to these problems."

The migration equation

The scale of the migration is staggering. Each day, some 180,000 people move into cities. By next year, more of the world's people will live in urban areas than rural areas. In less than 25 years, it's expected that two of every three people will be in cities.

Canada is already one of the most urban countries in the world, with 80 percent of the population living in cities. Other wealthy countries have also made the transition from a rural to a largely urban way of life.

Developing nations are now catching up, in a shift that is creating monumental problems for the world's poorest people. It will be necessary to build the equivalent of a city of one million people — a new Calgary — every week for the next 45 years to absorb these urban citizens.

photo: Roger Lemoyne/CIDA-ACDI

The new city dwellers will need services and amenities from water and electricity to homes, schools and health care. They will also bring with them difficult environmental and social problems — urban sprawl, power and transportation shortages, garbage and countless other issues.

A Canadian legacy

Canada has long played an important role in global urban issues. Vancouver played host 30 years ago to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, called Habitat, the first UN forum to look at what was needed to respond to growing urban populations. The 1976 conference attracted the likes of Mother Teresa, anthropologist Margaret Mead and futurist Buckminster Fuller.

Canada by this time had started emphasizing the importance of linking global environmental threats with urbanization, says Peter Oberlander, who was then the federal deputy minister for urban affairs and remains one of Canada's most prominent urban thinkers. "Canada said to the UN, 'If you are serious and you want to do something about the threat to the environment… you must deal with human settlements.'"

The Vancouver conference led to the creation of the United Nations Commission for Human Settlements, what is now UN-Habitat, the Nairobi-based agency for urban matters. Now, 30 years later, Canada has once again taken centre stage on the issue by hosting thousands of municipal officials, government representatives, planners, academics, business people and activists from June 19 to 23 at UN-Habitat's World Urban Forum (WUF) in Vancouver, the third biennial meeting of its kind.

In the keynote address to open the forum, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper told delegates that "urbanization is a powerful, irresistible phenomenon" and healthy cities are the key to the world's future. "Throughout history, great cities have been a hallmark of successful societies," he said, adding that Canadian cities with their diversity "are widely recognized as among the best in the world" but remain "works-in-progress."

The Government of Canada has made strengthening the country's cities a top priority, he said, through measures such as investing $16.5-billion in infrastructure projects, addressing the growth of violent crime related to gangs, guns and drugs, and helping to encourage public transit and provide affordable housing. "We will continue working to make our cities safer, cleaner and more prosperous than ever."

Charles Kelly, a Vancouver businessman who was the forum's commissioner general, says the world must pay attention to urbanization because of its potentially harmful impact on the environment worldwide. Kelly's own passion for city issues has its roots in that first Habitat conference in Vancouver, where he played an organizing role. "This was the early days of what has sometimes been characterized as the human tsunami, the mass movement of people to cities, and a very substantial number of those people into slums," he says. "Since Habitat, the problems of human settlements not only have persisted, they have multiplied manyfold in size, scope and complexity."

To Kelly, it's no accident that the recent WUF was held in Vancouver. The city, which will also host the 2010 Winter Games, has become internationally recognized as a showpiece of urban livability and has won awards for its environmental efforts and long-range planning.

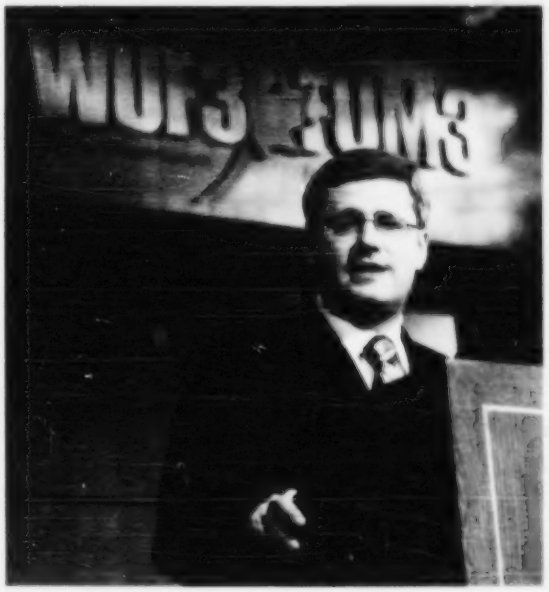
photo: PMO/Jason Ransom

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper speaks at the opening session of the World Urban Forum in Vancouver. "Urbanization is a powerful, irresistible phenomenon."

The forum's theme was sustainable cities, with the aim of sending all participants home with at least one good idea to act on and improve the quality of life in their communities. Observers say the challenges are numerous, complex and lack one-size-fits-all solutions. "Everything is interrelated here," Kelly says. "There are no magic bullets."

The environmental challenge

Cities use 75 percent of the world's resources and account for a similar percentage of its waste. The challenge is to make them develop sustainably even as they grow monumentally.

"The top opportunity is to connect the natural environment and its need for stewardship with the human environment that needs space and place for people to live and work," Oberlander says. "It takes very little to tip the scale."

Oberlander—whose wife, Cornelia Hahn Oberlander, is a landscape architect specializing in "green" design, for instance drawing inspiration from Canada's Mackenzie River system in designing the garden roof on the new Canadian embassy in Berlin—argues that people must think about land as a precious resource and allocate it accordingly.

Urban sprawl is eating up crucial farmland and making people more dependent on cars. Although planners stress more compact urban design or "densification," the demand from homebuyers for large properties in ever-widening city outskirts remains high. Cities range from the extremely dense—such as Hong Kong, with 5,000 people per hectare—to suburban Toronto, Johannesburg and Los Angeles, where there are only about 100 people per hectare.

Cities are also grappling with the demand among growing populations for energy. Powering urban areas in a sustainable way requires using more renewable forms of energy as well as conservation. San Diego, for example, has won international acclaim for its wide-ranging efforts to save energy, including producing electricity from a landfill's methane gas and upgrading the local police headquarters to become virtually self-sufficient in terms of energy.

The social cost

The social price of rapid urbanization has been high in developing countries. Roughly one billion people—one in six of the world's inhabitants—live in slums. That number is expected to double within 25 years.

One of the world's worst slums is Kibera in UN-Habitat's host city, Nairobi. Here, several hundred thousand people are jammed into tiny shacks that line filthy, narrow laneways and stinking brown streams. Clean water, electricity and cooking fuel are in short supply—and usually come at a high cost. Pit latrines in crime-ridden neighbourhoods are so dangerous to use at night that residents resort to what are known as "flying toilets": plastic bags filled with human waste tossed out of windows.

From this place of misery came a plea for help, a message from a slum dweller tapped out on a computer in rudimentary English during a global online "jam" sponsored by Canada and organized in the lead-up to the WUF event: *"My name is Hawa i live in Kibera i am a widow my husband passed away and left me with 8 children who are not even going to school because of lack of money. We live in a one bedroomed house with my eight children. i would like the gornment to build houses and offer less rent for everyone to afford."*

Securing cities

As more people flock to cities, urban spaces are where human security will be strengthened or threatened. Cities can be conflict-resilient, as different groups interact and build trust, while democratic authorities empower people to interact with the level of government closest to them.

Nonetheless, rapid urbanization, extreme poverty and failed public security in cities can lead to violence—exemplified by last year's riots in Paris, the ongoing civil strife in the Cité Soleil slum of Port-au-Prince in Haiti, and the recent brazen gang assaults on police and civilian targets in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

"We are seeing an unsustainable number of people move to cities," says Maciek Hawrylak of the Human Security Policy Division at DFAIT. "Local authorities are unable or unwilling to provide security in some cases, with the result that people are forced to ensure their own safety."

The wealthy fill the security void with private guards, while in slums, armed vigilante groups and gangs take over entire communities, Hawrylak says.

Mexico City alone is home to some 1,500 gangs. In nearly half the cities of Latin America and the Caribbean there are neighbourhoods where police fear to go or avoid

Remembering Jane Jacobs

Jane Jacobs, the Canadian writer and activist who died in April at the age of 89, was one of the most original thinkers of our time on urban issues. Jacobs' most important work was the influential and controversial *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, published in 1961. "The point of cities is multiplicity of choice," she wrote, championing new approaches to planning that respected people's preferences and behaviour and inspired generations of urban activists. A brave, singular voice challenging the dominant theories of the planning establishment, the self-taught Jacobs gave the world a fresh look at what makes cities work and what makes them fail.

A new approach to cities: The late writer and activist Jane Jacobs.

altogether. Slums are particularly dangerous for children, given the lethal mixture of kids, guns and gangs in those environments.

Rio de Janeiro's long-running conflict between police and drug gangs has seen levels of violence comparable to those experienced by countries undergoing civil war. More people, particularly children, were killed by armed violence in the city's slums between 1978 and 2000 than in Colombia's civil strife over the same period.

Finding solutions

Many of the world's fastest-growing cities are least able to afford the basic services that new urban citizens require. In Africa, city dwellers multiplied 10-fold between 1950 and 2000, with another doubling expected by 2020. Two thirds of Africa's urban citizens live in slums.

Solutions that focus on governance often get to the heart of the matter. The Philippine port city of Iloilo—one of the fastest-growing places in the country—was struggling in the early 1990s with problems such as inadequate drinking water, poor air quality and poverty. With the help of the Canadian Urban Institute (CUI), a unique partnership was devised between the city and surrounding communities to begin solving these problems and launch a promising economic development plan.

The CUI, with Canadian support, helped local officials in Iloilo create a consensus-based regional development council, modelled in part on the Greater Vancouver Regional District. The key, says Iloilo Mayor Jerry Treñas, was for officials across the region to come up with a collective solution. "The issues we faced spilled from one jurisdiction to the next," he says. "To move forward we knew we needed to come together." Now the region works cooperatively, for example in tourism programs that promote travel to heritage buildings and festivals in the city core as well as surrounding farms, villages and distant white sand beaches.

Big cities

In 1950, only one city, New York, had a population of more than 10 million. By 2015, 23 cities, most of them in developing countries, will have populations of more than 10 million.

source: UN-Habitat

The International Development Research Centre is looking at ways to improve the lives of slum dwellers while also protecting the environment as part of its Focus Cities Research Initiative, with projects aimed at everything from creating "edible neighbourhoods" to developing a dishwashing liquid that has a less harmful impact on soil *(see story on page 8)*.

Environmental sustainability and local governance are the focus of urban initiatives by CIDA, which invests more than $100 million a year on projects with an urban reach. For example, a municipal development group is working with local officials in 18 West African countries on issues such as ensuring local democratic governance and citizen input into anti-poverty efforts and training municipal employees and elected officials. In Haiti, a CIDA program has helped bring sustainable electricity service to the city of Jacmel. With reliable power in their homes and businesses 24 hours a day, residents have begun to regularly pay their energy bills, which has given Jacmel a level of social and economic development not seen elsewhere in Haiti.

The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has worked with UN-Habitat to show developing countries how to use satellite images and specialized computer systems to improve urban planning. For example, pictures from space can help identify areas vulnerable to mudslides or estimate the number of people in slums, providing key information in deciding where to install public water taps or build roads.

Pierre Lanciault, a CMHC manager, worked with the Kenyan city of Nakuru to show officials there how such images could be used to locate services in densely populated areas. "When we looked at the data, we showed them that a planned well was in the same watershed as a garbage dump," Lanciault says.

Many Canadian companies are showcasing their expertise in sustainable development technologies and services in rapidly growing cities. Baird and Associates, a coastal engineering firm based in Ottawa, is working with support from the federal government to turn a polluted and dusty canal bed running through the city of Viña del Mar, Chile, into a park-lined waterway.

In Matamoros, Mexico, Golder Associates, an international engineering and environmental services firm based in Toronto, is preparing a plan to close an existing dump

photo: courtesy of the Canadian Urban Institute

An informal settlement on Iloilo River. The Philippine port city of Iloilo has begun to solve its problems through a unique partnership with surrounding communities.

and collect energy from converted waste materials as well as build a modern landfill.

Under the CUI's international program, local government employees and other urban professionals from Canada volunteer on projects around the world aimed at promoting excellence in the governance and management of cities. "What we work on is the quality of urban life," says David Crombie, the former federal cabinet minister and Toronto mayor, who is now president and CEO of the institute.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities runs a similar initiative through its International Centre for Municipal Development. The centre, with support from Canada, allows officials in Canadian cities to help their international counterparts offer better services.

A new international policy lens

Global urbanization raises new issues for international affairs, particularly in areas such as development and immigration, says Canada's High Commissioner to Kenya, James Wall, who is Canada's Permanent Representative to UN-Habitat.

Mr. Wall says that challenges such as urban decay are "emerging issues" that will affect how Canada spends international assistance dollars. He adds that Canada must attract would-be immigrants to its cities from the so-called "global creative" class.

"Certain cities seem to have the key to success in terms of getting balance in life—providing a humane living environment and being able to attract talented people necessary for ongoing economic, social and cultural growth," Mr. Wall says. "That's certainly something Canada should be concentrating on."

The country has a key advantage in this area—one that is a lesson for the world's cities, he says. "Canada's multiculturalism policy has shown itself to allow for harmonious integration for people from around the world.... We do have something to offer by way of example."

The road ahead

The World Urban Forum meeting in Vancouver was a bridge to the fourth WUF session, which will be held in 2008 in Nanjing, China.

Canadian organizers are helping the next host city prepare for the event, mindful that China is a country dealing with massive urbanization. Between now and 2020, an additional 300 million Chinese are expected to move to cities; five of the world's 10 most polluted cities are in China.

"The need to focus on the issue of urbanization and the opportunities for Canadians to have an influence couldn't be clearer," says Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay. "We are looking at an international issue that needs concerted, long-range solutions."

Photo: CP/Ariana Cubillos

Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay meets with Haitian President René Préval in June. A program sponsored by Canada in Haiti has helped bring sustainable electrical service to Jacmel, giving the city a level of social and economic development not seen elsewhere in Haiti.

Indeed, in the midst of dire problems in many cities, there is reason for optimism.

Canadian environmental consultant John Carter found hope in Dhaka in the fact the Bangladeshi government agreed to act on environmental recommendations from the Canadian team there. Plastic shopping bags, a major pollutant constantly clogging already fragile drainage systems, are now banned in Dhaka. Police enforce the prohibition by issuing on-the-spot fines for storekeepers who use them.

Also gone are Dhaka's "baby taxis," which burned both oil and petroleum, spewing deadly black exhaust into the air. By government order, they've been replaced with vehicles that run on compressed natural gas. "These are indications of government will and commitment," Carter says, "and that's the key."

This also sets an example for others facing air pollution challenges. "Initiatives such as switching to compressed natural gas have great potential for replication in other crowded urban centres in South Asia," says Hau Sing Tse, vice president of the Asia Branch at CIDA.

For Charles Kelly, the WUF commissioner general, hope comes from an image that has stayed with him from a visit to a slum in Jakarta, Indonesia. There he watched as dozens of men and women left their shacks perfectly turned out in pressed white shirts and smart outfits, bound for jobs or schools.

"The hard work and tenacious spirit you find in these places fill one with hope," Kelly says. "They move to cities for a better life. Their aspirations need to be backed up by the rest of the world."

For more information on the World Urban Forum visit www.wuf3-fum3.ca.

FIGHTING URBAN POVERTY WITH GREEN KNOW-HOW

In the Malika district of Dakar, Senegal, the local population eke out an existence in the shadow of towering mountains known as Mbeubeuss. They tend vegetable patches, run small businesses and live like many people around the developing world.

But this place is different. The mountains here are made up entirely of garbage that stinks and smoulders and threatens to come sliding down with deadly force when it rains. Mbeubeuss is a working landfill site so polluted that a mayor of Dakar, Pape Diop, once called it a "danger for the whole country: a bomb about to explode."

Photo: Jean D'Aragon/IDRC

The doll maker of Mbeubeuss: In the giant Dakar landfill site, a man amasses piles of plastic eyes, arms and legs from discarded dolls and uses them to [illegible] new ones.

Yet hundreds of people have come here from the surrounding rural areas looking for a better way of life and found inventive ways to remain in the midst of this environmental menace.

"You marvel at their ingenuity and their social organization," says Naser Faruqui, team leader of the new Urban Poverty and Environment Program at Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). "This is a community with moms, dads and kids…The settlements at the dump site are grouped in the same way and have the same names as the villages in the countryside where these people came from."

Faruqui, who oversees an urban initiative aimed at transforming the dump dwellers' lives, was struck by a man who had amassed piles of plastic eyes, arms and legs and used them to repair scavenged dolls that, after his hard work, "looked quite good." One resident collected hair to create wigs. Many others picked through the garbage for scrap metal to sell.

This way of life—such as it is—will end in two to three years when Mbeubeuss closes and a modern landfill opens some 80 kilometres away. The challenge for IDRC, under its new Focus Cities Research Initiative, is twofold: finding new livelihoods for the doll maker and others who live [illegible] and rehabilitating the dump site in[illegible] useful and safe place.

A team of researchers, local people and government officials will consider moving some residents to the new dump, where they can be trained for official jobs. Another option is to offer garbage-collecting tasks in neighbourhoods around the old dump. As for Mbeubeuss itself, the team will study whether it can be transformed into an area for small businesses to set up shop. "If they're able to come up with ideas which make economic, social and environmental sense, then it may be a model for thousands of dump sites in Africa," Faruqui says.

Focus Cities reinforces Canada's commitment to fight poverty by reducing environmental impacts in urban areas. Faruqui says the urban poor often get trapped because they settle on marginal land, where they face hazards such as a lack of water and sanitation and the threat of landslides and flooding.

"Because of their poverty, they're subject to these environmental burdens, which in turn make their poverty worse," Faruqui explains. "For example, if they have a lack of water supply and sanitation, then their kids might have diarrhea and they have to pay for medicines."

Focus Cities is part of a shift at IDRC, prompted by rapid urbanization, to focus more on urban research projects. Work has begun in four cities—Dakar; Kampala, Uganda; Colombo, Sri Lanka; and Jakarta, Indonesia—with plans to designate another four.

The Jakarta team will look for ways to bring clean water, sanitation and garbage collection to a huge slum where local governments are cash-strapped. The trick is to convince residents that it's worth paying part of the up-front cost of such services, says Faruqui, who notes that poor people typically end up paying 10 to 20 times more to bring in bottled water than rich people do for piped water.

In Kampala, the goal is to improve "urban agriculture," in part by finding alternatives to the common practice of irrigating crops with untreated waste water. The research team there will study ways to isolate less contaminated household waste water used for things like washing and treat it with simple biological filters so it can be used to irrigate gardens.

© Larry MacDougal

MUNICIPALITIES PURSUE GLOBAL TRADE

World stage: Cities such as Calgary are taking major steps in drawing foreign trade and investment.

Cities are competing for international profile, funds and skills.

When financial giant Deutsche Bank looked to expand its commodities operations beyond world financial centres such as Frankfurt, London and Singapore, it opened an office in Calgary, Alberta. New York's Goldman Sachs has also settled in the western Canadian city. The presence of two international financial services companies there signals a community that's marketing itself on the world stage.

Attracting such firms is a major step in drawing foreign trade and investment, and Calgary's success underscores an effort in which hundreds of Canadian municipalities today are engaged: looking for international profile, funds and skills.

"There's been a significant increase in awareness of municipal governments of their potential internationally," observes Brock Carlton, Director of the International Centre for Municipal Development at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in Ottawa. Carlton says that cities such as Vancouver receive several international delegations a week looking to strike up or advance business relationships. "The connections are expanding exponentially."

The phenomenon of cities acting as trading centres dates back more than 3,000 years, when legions of mariner traders set sail from the ports of ancient Phoenicia. The practice is becoming more common and evolving rapidly in an age of urbanization, notes Bob Schulz, professor of strategic management at the University of Calgary's Haskayne School of Business, adding that benefits accrue to cities that market themselves directly.

"This is more targeted now," Schulz remarks. "There's less travelling to other places without knowing who is going to be on the other end."

There's also far more promotion of Canadian cities—or "clusters" of communities within regions—focusing on key economic sectors, which was a major topic of discussion at the World Urban Forum. "There's no question that the federal and provincial governments set the framework, but the really competitive area today is the region," comments Michael Darch of the Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation, which promotes Ottawa's knowledge-based industries.

For example, in setting itself up as a "hub" for the high-technology sector, Darch says, Ottawa competes more directly with California's Silicon Valley and India's high-technology centre in Bangalore than it does with Calgary, Vancouver or the so-called Canadian Technology Triangle around Kitchener-Waterloo and Guelph.

Canadian municipalities accentuate different specialties according to which international partner or industry they're approaching. Just east of Toronto, for example, the Regional Municipality of Durham is home to a major automobile manufacturing facility. However, it is primarily the region's status as a centre for nuclear power that will send a Durham delegation to India later this year to promote a 318-acre "energy park" near the Darlington nuclear power station.

"There are Indian companies looking to invest here and there may be opportunities in India for our companies," explains Doug Lindeblom, Director of Economic Development and Tourism for Durham, adding that the key today is partnerships between municipalities and companies in Canada and abroad.

The central driver in all this, of course, is globalization, which has created an imperative for cities to gain a presence in international markets.

"There's a more generalized competitiveness, not just for investment but for talent, for labour," says William Strange, a professor of urban economics at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management.

Cities have long collaborated in areas such as transportation and physical planning, and now cooperate on fiscal management issues through tax-base sharing. In an era of globalization, cities are joining together through networks. One such network, called the North American International Trade Corridor Partnership, is designed to build a huge regional market, facilitating contact between businesses, organizing virtual trade missions and putting together a huge directory of enterprises that can be consulted online.

Regional trade offices of DFAIT in cities across the country provide trade development services and assistance to Canadian businesses. Visit www.infoexport.gc.ca/regions.

As the world's cities grow, the number of young people—and their problems—are exploding.

Some 60 percent of the world's population will live in cities by 2030 and as many as 60 percent of these urban dwellers will be under the age of 18. Already, rapid urbanization is accompanied in developing countries by acute social problems, from homelessness and alienation to massive unemployment, overcrowding and the rise of violence and gang activity in growing slums.

Youths in the shantytown of Jalousie in Port-au-Prince, Haiti: Growing up in crowded households means spending more time on the streets.

Youth advocates say that as children and youth are often caught at the centre of the urban chaos, they can also be involved in generating solutions.

"Improving life in the cities just can't happen without youth being engaged," says Doug Ragan, Senior Manager of the Environmental Youth Alliance in Vancouver, a non-profit group that involves youth in areas such as urban agriculture and skills development. "Young people make up such a large percentage of cities…we have to try to get at this capacity young people have."

Jess Conn-Potegal, a member of the youth organizing committee for the recent World Urban Forum, agrees. "If we don't involve young people, then we're not creating solutions." The problems of urbanization, he says, include gang activity, violence and poverty in city slums, all of which have a disproportionate effect on young people. "The negative things that happen in the slums happen because of a sense of hopelessness."

Indeed, poorly policed slums are generating conditions for what are effectively "urban child soldiers." Young people growing up in crowded households spend more time on the streets, making them targets for recruitment into armed gangs or insurgent groups. Disenchanted youth find criminal activity to be a source of social mobility, self-esteem and economic opportunity.

"Slums are among the most dangerous places in the world to live, especially for kids," says Sarah Houghton of the Human Security Policy Division at DFAIT. Children as young as seven end up recruited by gangs, she says, becoming involved in arms and drug trafficking or the sex trade. It's an issue that Canada, as "a strong advocate of human security and a people-centred approach to foreign policy," sees as increasingly urgent, she adds.

In many developing countries, youth discontented with life in rural communities or forced out by civil conflict are joining the migration into cities, where they also face dismal prospects.

"Most of these young people feel they have no place in the world," says Eleanor Douglas of Save the Children Canada in Bogota, Colombia. She works with children affected by armed conflict in a program sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency. Douglas says that families have been "torn asunder" by decades of displacement, as well as by the "availability of arms and quick profits from the narcotics business, lack of meaningful work, and little access to relevant education."

Stan Williams of the Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association in Vancouver believes that dialogue on the issue can have an important impact. Williams, 29, an Aboriginal person from the Ketegaunseebee Garden River First Nation and Ohsweken First Nation reserves of Ontario, travelled with three colleagues to communities around Colombia last November setting up World Urban Cafés—open public forums on such urban problems as homelessness, crime and youth unemployment.

The Café program, which has staged more than 75 events in Africa, India, China, South America and Canada, includes discussion among young people, as well as music and performances. Williams says it has been an amazing experience to see participants bring their concerns forward. "One of our greatest results was having young people's voices heard."

Learn about the World Urban Forum and youth at www.eya.ca/wuf.

SLUM CITIES

Avril Benoît is a CBC Radio host and documentary producer based in Toronto. A native of Ottawa, Ontario, and Mont-Tremblant, Quebec, Benoît first joined the CBC in 1986. She has filed stories from Haiti, Germany, Kenya, Burundi, Brazil and India. Last year she was the Knowlton Nash Fellow at the University of Toronto, where her research focused on human rights, governance and development. This led to a series of radio reports from slums around the world, and the feature television documentary *Slum Cities: A Shifting World* on CBC Newsworld.

Perhaps it's a quirk of having worked in radio for so long, but I tend to recall places I've travelled to more by their sound than how they looked or smelled. Walking on the squishy "flying toilets" (feces-filled plastic bags) in Kibera slum in Nairobi would be plenty distracting to most people, but for me the dominant memory is the chorus of preschoolers squealing "How are you? How are you?" to the lone *muzungu* (white person) walking through their community of almost one million people.

In Rocinha, the biggest *favela* or shantytown in Rio de Janeiro, the crackle of gunfire between a narcotics gang and police sounded like a samba squad free-styling on tin pots. The drug dealers stayed hidden on high ground, maybe on the upper floors of one of the seven-story buildings that defy our notion of what a slum is supposed to look like. The gunfight was followed by the tender sounds of a ballad played over loudspeakers in the market, as dozens of us stood breathless, listening for the "all-clear." All the while, a nearby construction worker hammered away — as if it was pointless to be bothered by the daily violence.

And in Mumbai, home to six million slum dwellers from all over India, it was the sheer cacophony. The non-stop racket! It's a wonder anyone can sleep at night. For me, that din came to symbolize what it means to struggle, day in and day out, just to survive outside the fringes of the formal economy.

Perhaps the greatest hubbub I came across in a year of popping in and out of some of the world's worst slums was in the city-within-a-city called Dharavi. It's the biggest slum not only in Mumbai, but in all of Asia, with more than 800,000 people living on roughly two square kilometres.

On a sunset stroll, with the Muslim call to prayer bellowing from rooftop loudspeakers that distort more than amplify, I met some men running a back-alley movie theatre, with tinny audio that sounded like it was recorded with the microphone of a mini-camera, giving it that Bollywood bootleg authenticity. A short distance away, a Sufi saint decked out in billowing green satin, Aladdin-style, black makeup smudged around his bugged-out eyes, bestowed blessings in a low voice, gently conking me on the head with his staff. He accepts cash donations. A barber sitting cross-legged on a plank of wood by the roadside chatted incessantly as he shaved, with a straight razor, the face of the customer sitting in front of him.

Sounds of the slums: Avril Benoît interviews musicians in the Rio de Janeiro shantytown called Vigario Geral.

There are many ways to make a rupee or two. And India's poor seem to have figured them all out.

The next morning on the outskirts of the slum, I noticed a gas station that seemed to be working in reverse, one taxi after another pulling in for the teenage attendant to empty their tanks rather than fill them up. The cab drivers, one presumes, sell the fuel without the assent of the owners, simply returning to the dispatch centre with less gas than they left with.

It sounds like mayhem, I know. And there's more on the way. By 2020, fully 40 percent of the world's population of 9 billion people will live in overcrowded urban slums without adequate sanitation, public services or, most importantly, title deeds to the wee parcels of land they've built their shacks on.

But buried just beneath the surface is the irony that these slum dwellers are among the most entrepreneurial people on earth. Amid all the filth and noise, you will rarely hear anything sounding remotely like defeat.

WOMEN OF THE WORLD

A new generation of women diplomats is delivering Canada's message abroad and putting a fresh face on the country's foreign policy.

Two years ago, Andrea Clements accepted her first foreign posting as Consul and Senior Trade Commissioner in Fukuoka, Japan.

Clements' background as an academic and management consultant, a stint as a teacher in Japan and three years serving in Canada's diplomatic service made her a natural choice to run one of the country's six offices in Japan. But she left for her assignment mindful that as a married woman with a newborn baby, she would have been barred from taking on the job just a generation ago.

photo courtesy of Andrea Clements, DFAIT

Andrea Clements with her son Kai, who was two months old when Clements became Canada's Consul and Senior Trade Commissioner in Fukuoka, Japan, her first foreign posting.

Clements is one of a new crop of women diplomats—multilingual, highly educated and juggling relationships and families—who are putting a fresh face on what was once largely a man's world. Representing Canada abroad, they underscore the country's determination to be a global leader in areas such as promoting progress for women, protecting human rights in war-torn regions and fighting against HIV/AIDS.

In 1995, Canada, along with the international community, committed itself to the Beijing Platform for Action, which identifies key concerns such as the dangers for women in conflict and opportunities for women in political decision making. At the United Nations, Canada has co-led a campaign to improve the participation of women in high-level decision-making positions. And through membership in multilateral bodies such as the Commonwealth, the Organization of American States and La Francophonie, Canada is pressing for recognition of the rights of women, especially those who, as a result of armed conflict, have no voice, property rights or security.

"Over the last 30 years, the Government of Canada has not only demonstrated its awareness of gender parity but has played a leading role in integrating a gender-based perspective and the advancement of the rights of women internationally," observes Marie-Lucie Morin, who was recently named Canada's second female Deputy Minister of International Trade. A mother of four, Morin, 48, has had foreign postings in Norway, Moscow, London, Jakarta and San Francisco and is one of eight women among the 26 deputy ministers in the federal government. "Canada is seen as a world leader in promoting women's rights and gender equality."

Canadian engagement in Afghanistan, for example, involves women and girls as participants in the rebuilding of their country in areas including governance and economic development. And in Sudan, Canada provides direct aid to help Darfuri women who are victims of rape and marginalized by limited access to education, property and power.

"It is only by making women a part of Afghanistan's recovery that change and progress will be sustainable," says Chantale Walker, senior advisor on gender equality at DFAIT. "We have been active in addressing gender equality as a crucial component of the Darfur peace talks." The benefits, Walker adds, accrue to all. "Gender equality is not only about women; it is about equality between men and women, boys and girls."

Women currently account for some 40 percent of foreign service officers, up from just eight percent in 1981, while the proportion of those in senior management climbed to 27 percent from 8.7 percent over the same period. In January 2005, 27 of 132 heads of Canada's foreign missions were women, an increase from just 15 in 2000.

"In the foreign service, as in many other fields of endeavour, women are making slow but steady progress, while facing the same basic issue of how to combine a career with family life," remarks Margaret Weiers, author of a recent book on Canadian women diplomats called *Envoys Extraordinary: Women of the Canadian Foreign Service*.

In the early days, the diplomatic field was virtually closed to Canadian women. Those with talent got their start as departmental clerks—"lady typewriters" according to historian John Hilliker—and rose through the ranks on sheer ability. Agnes McCloskey, for example, was trilingual and joined what was then the Department of External Affairs in 1909 as a clerk, later working for legendary Under-Secretary of State O. D. Skelton in the 1930s. She went

photo: Foto-Engels

First posting: Newly arrived in Bonn in the spring of 1954, Pamela McDougall stands outside the president's residence with a group of diplomats including Charles Ritchie (on her right), who had just presented his credentials as Canada's Ambassador to Germany.

photo: John Evans

Life's achievement: Pamela McDougall receives an award from Governor General Edward Schreyer upon her retirement in 1981.

on to serve as the department's chief accountant until 1943, when she was appointed vice-consul in New York, the first Canadian woman with diplomatic rank abroad.

In 1947, women were allowed to enter the foreign service, but for years after they were forced to resign if they married because they could not be posted abroad, Hilliker says. A directive in 1965 reminded "female members of the staff" that marriage made them "non-rotational for all practical purposes" and consequently broke "an essential condition of their employment." The ban on married women serving abroad was not lifted until 1970.

The career of retired diplomat Pamela McDougall echoes the gradual move of women from the sidelines to the mainstream of Canadian foreign policy. Trained as a chemist and able to speak English, French and German, McDougall first joined External Affairs in 1949 as a clerk. In 1952, she passed the foreign service exam and 18 months later was posted to Bonn, where she assisted Canada's efforts to rebuild post-war Germany. "It was a wild period."

In 1968, after assignments in the Far East and India, McDougall became Canada's envoy to Poland, a three-year posting that coincided with the birth of the Solidarity movement in Eastern Europe. She was Canada's second woman ambassador, preceded only by Margaret Meagher, who headed Canada's mission to Israel in 1960.

In 1981, appointed as a one-person royal commission on Canada's foreign service, McDougall spared no criticism of the low morale and poor living conditions of diplomats working abroad and the spouses who accompanied them. Single throughout her diplomatic career, McDougall married at 61, five years after she left the foreign service. Now 81, she marvels at the current crop of female envoys who juggle overseas assignments with marriage and motherhood.

Clements, for example, arrived in Fukuoka when her son was only two months old. "One of the most challenging parts of this posting has been my family situation," she says. Expected to attend diplomatic functions one or two nights a week, she praises the flexibility of her husband, Toru Harada, a teacher who acted as a stay-at-home father (almost unheard of in Japan) until their son moved into daycare at 18 months of age.

The juggling act is even tougher for single mothers. Isabelle Roy, who was appointed last year as Canada's ambassador to Mali, a fast-growing mission in Africa, is a separated mother of two teenagers, who live with her. "When you are a couple, there is a balance possible," says Roy, a former teacher in Gabon and consultant for the World Bank who joined the foreign service in 1993. "But alone it is not easy."

Roy recalls the blunt words of the female director general in Ottawa who supported her appointment. "She told me, 'This is a test. If you fail, we fail — in the sense that we don't want to think these posts are reserved for men.'"

While happy with her job, the family adjustments over the past year have been "harder than I thought," Roy admits. In addition to her regular duties — travel within and outside Mali and attendance at special diplomatic events — she has to cope with the children missing their father back home. She puts in long days, but maintains a flexible schedule to meet the children for lunch some days and plans well ahead for their regular visits back to Canada. At times, Roy must rely on trusted friends to help out when she is called to meetings out of the country that conflict with the kids' school timetable and activities.

The balancing act is not just for women with families. Nadia Scipio del Campo, 30, joined the foreign

photo: courtesy of Kimberly Phillips, DFAIT

Canadian diplomat Kimberly Phillips in Kyiv, Ukraine, where she was a member of the Canadian team observing the repeat Ukrainian presidential election of December 2004.

service in 2002 to put her degrees in environmental science and geology to work internationally. The head of public affairs in the Canadian High Commission in India finds herself in a commuting relationship with her boyfriend in Berlin.

"A career in the foreign service means uprooting yourself on a regular basis," she says. "The challenge is to find a partner or spouse who likes that lifestyle and has a career that is mobile."

Meanwhile, Canada's diversity affords a deep pool of talented women who have much to offer the foreign service. In 1993, DFAIT hired former journalist and public servant Kimberly Phillips, a Métis of Ojibway descent. "Despite a keen interest in travelling and working overseas, I had never considered a career in the foreign service," says Phillips, 37, who serves as a public affairs counsellor at the Canadian embassy in Stockholm. "Had I not been approached, I never would have applied."

Since signing on, she has travelled to more than 60 countries, lived in four countries, studied two foreign languages, served as an election monitor in Timor Leste and Ukraine and attended several G8 summits. She also reaches out to members of Canada's aboriginal community, especially women, to suggest that they consider a diplomatic career, but says "more needs to be done to make our diplomatic service even more reflective of Canada's diversity."

Like their male counterparts, women diplomats use special events to take Canada's message to the world. Earlier this year, on the occasion of International Women's Day, Consul Andrea Clements hosted a networking lunch for local businesswomen in Fukuoka and asked each invitee to bring a female guest. Such an all-women event is rare in Japan, notes Clements, who used the occasion to talk about the support that exists for women in the workplace in Canada.

"This has not only given us the opportunity to highlight Canada's leadership in this area…and promote Canadian values," she observes, "It also made for excellent business relationships and contacts for the consulate and Canadian businesses."

Ultimately, breakthroughs for women diplomats enrich Canada's reputation in the world, says freshman diplomat Dilani Hippola. The daughter of Sri Lankans who came to Canada almost 40 years ago, Hippola, 26, was shaped by her family and by the respect for diversity and human rights she witnessed while growing up in Canada.

This fall, she heads off to a posting in India eager to communicate Canadian values abroad and interpret the fast-growing region for those back home. The path beaten by previous Canadian women envoys makes her job easier, Hippola says. "If you are trying to sell an idea, the best way is to be an example of it yourself."

Leading by example

Diplomats seek out every avenue to showcase Canadian values and promote Canada's place in the world. But sometimes an opportunity presents itself. That's what happened with Pamela Isfeld, 40, a foreign service officer serving as political advisor to Canadian Brigadier-General David Fraser, the commander of the multinational military coalition in Southern Afghanistan based in Kandahar.

Isfeld recalls being mobbed by little girls "fascinated by the idea that I got to travel around with all those soldiers," while on a visit earlier this year with the commander to a nearby province. "I'd like to think that some of them might remember meeting me and think, 'hey, she did that, I should be able to.'"

A political scientist with a specialty in Soviet studies, Isfeld joined the foreign service in 1993. Last fall after taking part in a tactical reconnaissance mission to Kandahar, she volunteered for the one-year assignment there.

She believes that women sometimes have an advantage in such difficult settings because they are not seen as a threat. "Feminine qualities can be quite valuable in diplomacy, even in a traditional society like Afghanistan," she says. "I have certainly been able to gain access, pass messages, and ask impolitic questions that my male colleagues would not have gotten away with."

But no matter who is in the job, she adds, "flexibility and adaptability are huge assets in this kind of work."

photo: Mat. Derrick MacAulay, DND

Canadian diplomat Pamela Isfeld travels by helicopter to Qalat, the capital of Zabul province, north of Kandahar.

GLOBALIZATION IS JUST BEGINNING

Donald Johnston is retiring after 10 years as Secretary-General of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris, following a career in Canada as an academic, lawyer, author and politician. From 1978 to 1988, he was a member of Parliament, serving as a cabinet minister in a number of senior portfolios including President of the Treasury Board, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. Johnston became Secretary-General of the OECD in 1996, the only Canadian and first non-European elected to the post. Over his two terms, he played a major role in globalizing the organization, which now works with more than 70 non-OECD economies throughout the world in areas such as agriculture; trade; macro-economic, labour and social issues; corporate governance; and the effectiveness of development assistance programs. He left the OECD in May and is succeeded by Angel Gurría, the former foreign minister and finance minister of Mexico.

photo: OECD/OCDE

OECD Secretary-General Donald Johnston: "The end of the last century and the beginning of this one will be characterized as the dawn of the 'Age of Globalization.'"

The Dark Ages, the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution: these may be phrases from previous centuries, but they carry a multitude of images, lessons and historical memories that are still relevant today. I believe that the end of the last century and the beginning of this one will be characterized as the dawn of the "Age of Globalization."

Not that globalization is a new phenomenon. International trade and investment, to take just two examples from the many areas affected by globalization, have a long history. And markets have been international for centuries. According to economic historian Angus Maddison, some 3,500 Dutch merchant ships plied the seven seas in about 1670. The Dutch fleet dwarfed all others at the time. The leading capitalist country of the 19th century, Britain, which embarked on market integration, albeit largely within a colonial context, developed a policy of eliminating tariffs and imposed the policy on others. At the same time, it opened its economy to agricultural imports and watched its own agricultural sector wither away.

The mobility of capital in the latter part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century was enormous. The gross nominal value of capital invested abroad in 1914 by the U.K., France and Germany was greater than in 1938. Capital mobility was quite extraordinary at the end of the so-called liberal era before the First World War. In 1914, the stock of foreign capital invested by western European countries in developing countries was 32 percent of their GDP. Although we have, in recent years, drawn close to this level of investment in developing countries, we have never exceeded it.

So why are we so preoccupied and concerned with the notion of free trade and globalization today, if they are merely an extension of what we have already experienced? The difference is that the extent of global integration between national markets is much greater than in the past—although, in many respects, less than popular opinion would have us believe. Moreover, it is the fast pace of change that has put

image: NMM London

International markets: A painting of Dutch merchant ships under sail by Willem van de Velde, the Elder, 1649. Some 3,500 Dutch merchant ships plied the seven seas in the era.

enormous pressure on societies to adapt and to create new skills.

Just how integrated is today's global economy? One indicator is trade, now a major engine of growth in developed and developing countries alike. The volume of world merchandise traded today is about 22 times what it was in 1950. During the same period, the value of the world's output has increased seven times over.

Perhaps the deepest integration of all has been the cross-border link-ups of enterprises. The share of OECD countries' capital formation founded on foreign direct investment rose to more than 10 percent in recent years, having stood at around 4 percent for decades.

An increasing proportion of this is in developing countries, including "South-South" investment, but OECD economies still account for the lion's share. Furthermore, the activities of foreign affiliates of multinational enterprises are perhaps the most important drivers of global integration. The share of foreign affiliates in manufacturing turnover has risen in nearly all OECD countries over the past decade.

Efforts to attract foreign capital, especially in the form of foreign direct investment, are critical to growth everywhere. As with trade, foreign direct investment is a win-win deal for host and home countries alike. According to OECD data, for each extra dollar of outward foreign direct investment, there are two dollars of additional exports which, in turn, translate into additional jobs in the home country.

So have we finished integrating? Globalizing? Have we reaped all the benefits? Certainly not yet. It is the high-income countries that have predominantly participated in expanding trade and investment. And their firms will continue to think and act globally—they will not go into reverse. The non-OECD world can become much more integrated into the global economy too. The non-OECD Asian countries have joined world markets more successfully than Latin American countries and much more so than most African countries. And capital markets are still far from being fully integrated.

While developing countries can participate more, so can advanced economies. A recent (and widely quoted) OECD study argues that if barriers to trade, foreign direct investment and domestic competition were reduced on both sides of the Atlantic, the cumulative effect on earnings would mean workers in the OECD area could make an additional full year's wage or more across their lifetimes.

This should be seen as good news. But at the OECD, which has a key role in bringing about a globalization from which all benefit, we know it is not sufficient to point to such incontrovertible evidence that liberalization and market integration work. It is also necessary to address the worries of citizens—and even countries—who see themselves as losers, with their noses pressed against the window looking in at the winners.

Global integration has much farther to go, not least in ensuring that its benefits accrue to all countries. It has much more to achieve in terms of economic growth and concomitant social welfare. This is the age of globalization, but it is just the beginning.

Learn more about the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development at www.oecd.org.

The futuristic skyline of Shanghai, China: The non-OECD Asian countries have successfully joined the world markets.

Photo: Getty Images/Jeremy Woodhouse

NO BORDERS HERE

Canadian artists from the Arab world find inspiration in 1,001 sources.

photo: courtesy of Ruba Nadda

KHALIFA'S

مؤسسات الخليفة

Canadian director Ruba Nadda, who was born in Montreal but spent her childhood moving between Syria and Canada, published short fiction in literary journals and produced more than two dozen short films before working on the film *Sabah*.

For Nadine Ltaif, a poet of Lebanese origin who has lived in Quebec for more than 25 years, "there are no limits to inspiration." In a recent lecture at a cultural symposium in New Delhi, Ltaif noted that some critics believe that *The Thousand and One Nights*, the classic collection of Arabic tales, originated in India. Small wonder, then, that for Ltaif and many artists of Arabic origin who have made Canada home, anything goes.

Canada's Middle Eastern community is a mix of Arab and other ethnic groups, Jewish, Muslim and Christian religions, English and French languages, and cultures spanning North Africa, the Gulf states and the Levant. The resulting broad spectrum of approaches and concerns has given birth to a vibrant arts community that draws on its origins, its new homeland—and all points in between.

Two musical artists who appeared at last year's Festival du Monde Arabe in Montreal illustrate the fluid play between cultures. Born in Libya, Sam Shalabi plays instruments as varied as guitar and *oud* (lute) in a dozen or so Montreal bands, producing psychedelic pop that is flavoured with Middle Eastern sounds. Quebec singer Lynda Thalie performs music that fuses what she calls the "honey" of her native Algeria with the "maple syrup" of Canada.

The first exhibition of Arab-Canadian visual artists, called The Lands Within Me, at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, showcased the work of Canadian artists originating from across the Arab world in a variety of media including calligraphy, contemporary painting and jewellery.

Many artists from the region work in more than one discipline, expanding artistic—as well as cultural—frontiers. Born in Egypt to Armenian parents, Atom Egoyan has become one of Canada's most celebrated filmmakers. In addition to writing his own scripts, he has adapted several novels to the screen, including *Where the Truth Lies*. This fall, he will direct Wagner's *Die Walküre* at the Canadian Opera Company.

Egoyan co-produced *Sabah*, the first feature film of Ruba Nadda, who was born in Montreal but spent her childhood moving between Syria and Canada. Nadda published short fiction in literary journals and produced more than two dozen short films before *Sabah*—the story of a 40-year-old Muslim woman who falls in love with a non-Muslim, non-Arab man.

Veils Uncovered, a recent short documentary by Canadian filmmaker Nora Kevorkian, examines the lives of women in Damascus, Syria. Like Arsinée Khanjian—Atom Egoyan's wife, creative partner and the star of *Sabah*—Kevorkian is of Armenian and Lebanese heritage.

While the Arabic influence is strong in English-Canadian culture, it is especially pronounced in Quebec. In *Voices in the Desert*, an anthology of Arab-Canadian women writers, editor Elizabeth Dahab points out that most Arab-Canadian writers work in French. Her anthology features poetry and prose that often address questions of identity, cultural exile and gender inequality.

One of the writers, Abla Farhoud, settled in Quebec during the 1950s.

Mexico honours Quebec sculptor

René Derouin, an engraver and sculptor from Quebec, has been awarded Mexico's Order of the Aztec Eagle, a first for a Canadian artist. Derouin describes himself as a "latino del norte," and has held several exhibitions of his work in Mexico, including at the renowned Rufino Tamayo Museum of Contemporary Art. He said that the award "strengthens the special relationship that I have had with Mexico, its people and culture throughout my career." The Order of the Aztec Eagle is the highest award that the Mexican government gives to foreign artists in recognition of their contribution to the country.

photo: courtesy of the Mexican Consulate, Montreal

Québécois engraver and sculptor René Derouin has received Mexico's Order of the Aztec Eagle.

photo: CP/Aaron Harris

Canadian director Atom Egoyan and his wife Arsinée Khanjian attend the Toronto International Film Festival.

By 17, she was performing in Radio-Canada television productions, and later studied theatre in France and Quebec. Her much-performed play, *Les filles du 5-10-15*, explores the generational conflicts between two young girls and their parents, who run a five-and-dime store.

Michelle Hartman, who teaches Arabic literature at McGill University's Institute of Islamic Studies, says that the arts frequently feature the theme of people having "a different relationship with a homeland" that they are exiled or separated from. "We tend to read novels or other cultural work through the lens of identity," she explains, "But a lot of authors are more interested in being read for their artistic value."

May Telmissany is a case in point. The Egyptian-born novelist named her first novel, *Doniazade*, after a character in *The Thousand and One Nights*. "I started it three days after losing my child," she says, finishing the book in three months but later reworking it to add fictional elements. For Telmissany, it's the universal story of a woman coping with the loss of a stillborn child rather than a novel about "an Egyptian woman living in Cairo."

Cultural context is impossible to ignore. Wajdi Mouawad, a Québécois actor, playwright, novelist, stage director and film director, fled the civil war in Lebanon at 16 and settled in Montreal with his parents. Mouawad has written some dozen plays as well as adapting classics by Cervantes, Shakespeare and Chekhov to great acclaim, but is best known for *Littoral*, a comic-tragic tale of a young Montrealer of Lebanese descent who takes his dead father back to the old country for burial.

Lebanon's civil war also forced Nadine Ltaif to abandon home and friends. "I look back on that time as a wound—a scar," she says. The trauma informed her first book of poems, *Les Méiamorphoses d'Ishtar*, which examined social oppression and women's empowerment. For the past decade, Ltaif has worked with Hejer Charf, a filmmaker originally from Tunisia, on projects such as Charf's film *Les Passeurs*, which offers hope for reconciling the needs of different cultures and races. The fact that she is a Christian and Charf is a Muslim, says Ltaif, "makes it doubly significant to work on a film about reconciliation."

Ltaif appeared in a National Film Board documentary in 1992 directed by Michka Saäl, a Jewish woman originally from Tunisia. *A Sleeping Tree Dreams of its Roots* uses super-8 home movies, old photos, dramatizations and casual conversations to explore the varied ancestries of Ltaif and Saäl. "I no longer 'dream of my roots,'" says Ltaif today. "Sitting in a café in Montreal or seeing a squirrel in a tree can inspire me to write."

Learn about Canada's International Cultural Relations Program at www.international.gc.ca/arts.

Passport Canada passes three-million mark

photo: courtesy of Passport Canada

Passport Canada's volume has reached levels never seen before, with more than three million passports issued last year. "More Canadians than ever before recognize that the passport is the best travel document," said Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay.

Passport Canada, a special operating agency of DFAIT, has seen a steady increase in volume over the past five years. In 2001-2002, some 1.7 million passports were issued and about 27 percent of the population held a valid passport. By 2005-2006, more than three million passports were issued and close to 40 percent of the population had passports. Passport Canada forecasts that by 2008-2009, some 3.8 million passports will be issued and almost half of all Canadians will hold passports.

To meet the demand, Passport Canada has 33 offices across the country, as well as more than 90 Canada Post and Service Canada receiving agents who help ensure applications are correctly completed. It also offers extended hours during the week and Saturday service in busier offices during the peak winter season.

To avoid congestion and shorten waiting times, Passport Canada recommends that Canadians apply for passports in the spring, summer or fall. They can send their applications by mail, use Service Canada or Canada Post services or fill out their application using "Passport on-line" at **www.passportcanada.gc.ca**.

FACING THE THREAT OF AN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC

When the last major influenza pandemic struck in 1918, the massive movement of troops across the Atlantic at the end of the First World War helped transmit the deadly Spanish flu far and wide.

Today, with tens of thousands of people jetting around the world each day, it's likely that a new influenza pandemic would spread with even greater ease.

While the H5N1 avian flu virus remains largely a danger to birds, with only a few hundred human cases caused by direct exposure to infected birds, the possibility of a human influenza pandemic exists if the avian flu virus mutates or combines to form a new human strain. Staff of DFAIT, both at home and in missions abroad, have been preparing to handle diplomatic, consular and trade issues that might arise in a pandemic, and to ensure that accurate information about the disease is relayed and essential services are provided.

"With its international focus, this department is taking contingency plans for a possible outbreak of pandemic influenza very seriously," says Ruth Archibald, the senior coordinator for pandemic preparedness at DFAIT. Foreign missions have detailed plans for all potential pandemic phases that could be declared by the World Health Organization (WHO), Archibald says, and the department has recently developed a plan for its headquarters staff.

Romania's announcement in March of a quarantine related to an outbreak of the H5N1 flu virus in Cernavoda, a town of 20,000 people southeast of Bucharest, might not have drawn much attention, except that some 250 Canadian workers and their families were living there temporarily while working for Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. Staff of Canada's embassy in Bucharest kept abreast of the Canadian workers' situation until the quarantine was lifted.

Howard Njoo, Associate Director General of the Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response at the Public Health Agency of Canada, says it's expected that between 15 and 35 percent of the population would become infected during the course of a human influenza pandemic—some seriously, others less so.

One of the first international effects of a pandemic would likely be travel restrictions. Njoo says that, as a control measure, seriously affected countries would start screening people leaving their borders to see whether they had any symptoms of the flu. "What you are really trying to do is slow down the spread of the virus so that you gain time to develop a vaccine," he says.

A researcher analyzes the carcass of a dead duck in Brescia, Italy, for signs of the avian flu virus as part of control measures introduced in Italy.

In a document entitled *Responding to the Avian Influenza Pandemic Threat: Recommended Strategic Actions*, the WHO notes that "countries with pandemic response plans, ideally rehearsed in advance, will be in the best position to make decisions and take actions rapidly."

Managers at DFAIT have conducted "tabletop" planning exercises with missions in Beijing and London to develop and test response strategies in the event of a pandemic, and have identified the critical services that will continue to be offered.

"Essential staff will be available, but you are not going to have the same level of service," says Archibald, whose great-uncle died of the Spanish flu, having returned to Canada after fighting in the First World War.

Scott Corcoran, Deputy Director of emergency planning in the Consular Affairs Bureau at DFAIT, says Canada's foreign embassies and consulates do not provide medical services to Canadian travellers, although they can provide information on where to seek help.

Some 2.5 million Canadians live, work or are travelling abroad at any given time.

For further information on pandemic influenza preparation visit www.influenza.ca. Information for travellers is at www.fac-aec.gc.ca/avianflu-en.asp.

Canada hosts international AIDS conference

The XVI International AIDS Conference will be held in Toronto from August 13 to 18. The theme of the high-profile event is "Time to Deliver," focusing on the promises and progress made in the global fight against HIV/AIDS. This is expected to be the largest of the biennial conferences to date, with more than 20,000 delegates from the scientific community, civil society organizations and academic institutions, as well as political leaders, government officials and international dignitaries. The Government of Canada is a strong supporter of the conference, contributing over $4 million to the event and organizing several conference sessions including a leadership forum. Canada has invested more than $800 million over the past five years to deal with HIV/AIDS around the world and is committed to an evidence-based approach to combatting the disease that promotes human rights, gender equality and partnerships with civil society. More information on the conference is at **www.AIDS2006.org**.

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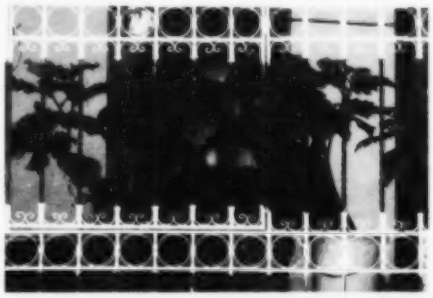
Exposing Urban Solutions

A photo contest sponsored by Canada's International Development Research Centre has shed light on the creative ways in which people are making their cities better places to live. Professional and amateur photographers were asked to submit digital photos representative of how people are tackling the challenges of urban living. The images were grouped in four theme areas; from each category, *Canada World View* selected one photo showing how people are coping with big-city living.

Find out more about the International Development Research Centre at www.idrc.ca.



Cities Feeding People
(growing food in urban areas)

My Vegetable Plants by McLloyd Jumpay, Mandaluyong City, Philippines.
A tenant waters eggplants early in the morning in Manila, the Philippines. Due to a shortage of land and the high cost of food, Filipinos plant vegetables in discarded plastic containers.

Waste Not, Want Not
(recycling)

Garbagemen by Arie Basuki, Bogor, Indonesia.
People pick through a dump in Jakarta, Indonesia, for material useful for industrial purposes.

Liquid Gold
(the productive uses of water)

Reflections of Adaptation and Conservation by Meaghen Simms, Ottawa, Canada.
Once used for brewing yak-butter tea, a traditional kettle collects water in the courtyard of the Jokhang Temple in central Lhasa, Tibet.

Avoiding Disaster
(risk-proofing the urban environment)

Local Riverbank Erosion Protection by Iftekhar Ahmed, Pathumthani, Thailand.
Riverbank erosion is a serious and regular hazard in Sunamganj, Bangladesh. Concrete retention walls and dikes are unaffordable; low-cost bamboo prevents the banks from washing away and can be locally renewed.